

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY POLICY ON INTEGRITY IN SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

Preamble

The University recognizes that academic freedom is essential for progress in teaching, research and scholarship. The University also recognizes the necessity to maintain the highest ethical standards in the conduct of scholarly activities. Furthermore, the University has a responsibility to the public and to its funding sources to ensure that its members uphold integrity and honesty in all of their academic pursuits. This objective can only be accomplished by the development and mutual understanding of clear policies which seek to address issues of integrity and the handling of misconduct within the University community.

One of the conclusions that emerged from a conference on integrity organized by the three federal granting councils is that "Universities must do more than enact and enforce tougher measures guarding against research fraud and misconduct to ensure public trust and accountability. They must also nurture an ethical culture and a greater sense of collective and individual responsibility for ethical behaviour" (Hogan, 1995).

Accordingly, the present policy advocates a two-pronged approach to promote integrity: the University will take proactive measures to cultivate an ethical environment at all levels of the academe; it will also provide clear guidelines and procedures of due process in handling ethical misconduct in scholarship and research.

This policy has been approved by the Office of the Provost, and adopted by the relevant Academic Councils of the University and communicated to all those involved in teaching and research within the University community. The principles and procedures adopted in this policy will also be communicated to the student body.

Principles of Integrity in Research & Scholarship

The primary ethical concern of all members of the academic community is to promote human welfare and respect for all forms of life. As a Christian university, whose mission goes beyond the betterment of society, the overarching ethical guideline is to practice integrity in order to glorify God and honour Christ.

The following specific principles, as summarized by Heppner et al. (1992), are predicated upon the above general moral considerations. It is deemed that these ethical principles should encompass all scholarly activity, including the use of human subjects and dissemination of research findings:

- **Nonmaleficence:** Research should not harm participants and the society that supports it. This principle dictates that the academic freedom of researchers must always be balanced by considerations of potential harm to others.
- **Beneficence:** Research should contribute to the welfare of participants and society at large. While academic pursuit has its own rewards, the use of public money for research needs to be justified in terms of extending the knowledge base and promoting the welfare of all people.
- **Justice:** This ethical principle dictates that all people should be treated with fairness and equality. Thus, participants in research and students in the classroom should be treated as individuals with dignity. Similarly, university administrators should treat all professors with equity and fairness, regardless of their rank or the amount of research funding that they bring into the university. By the same token, university administrators and granting agencies are expected to be fair and just in distributing funds for research and scholarship on the basis of the merit and excellence of research proposals based on a neutral and objective peer-review process.
- **Fidelity:** This principle of intellectual honesty must be extended to every aspect of university life – from public announcements and course syllabi to scholarly publications and presentations. Every effort must be made to ensure accuracy and truthfulness.

Procedures for Promoting Integrity

The University believes that, in the long run, the best way to promote integrity is not through punitive measures, but through cultivating an ethical environment and at the same time dealing with the root causes of misconduct.

Two views have been expressed regarding the root causes of misconduct. One commonly held view is that "integrity is a matter of individual conscience, responsibility and accountability. Ethical problems exist today in faculty research and behaviour primarily because some scholars have not been educated in matters of personal ethics" (Adjibolosoo, 1995, p. 25). To prevent individual failings, the University is responsible to raise the awareness of ethical principles among all students, staff and faculty through preparing information packages, education on ethical issues, and the use of a mentor system. In addition, the University will continue its efforts to foster an ethical climate that is conducive to integrity and responsible professionalism.

Another view, which has gained increasing acceptance, blames the failings on a system that reinforces expediency, careerism, and "grantsmanship". For example, intense competition for grant money "contributes to the temptation to stoop to fraud ... thus eroding the moral fiber of some scientists, who resort to cheating to keep up with what they perceive as the pace of their colleagues' accomplishments" (Garfield, 1987, p. 4). Reporting on the recent conference on integrity, Hogan (1995) also notes that "The

intensity of academic competition was a big issue at the conference. Today's production-driven culture was described as an environment that fosters the risk of ethical abuse" (p. 12).

In a number of articles dealing with intellectual dishonesty and deviant behaviour in science, Garfield has provided a compelling case that funding practices contribute to misconduct. For example, "current funding patterns for scientific research have reinforced situations where an accomplished scientist presides over the research activities of a large number of postdoctoral fellows and graduate students" and this senior scientist receives first authorship on papers in which he does not participate (Garfield, 1982, p.6). Begley (1987) observes that "A government grant system that rewards researchers who churn out the most reports ... promotes honorary authorship and pressures investigators to publish or perish -- which may induce outright fraud" (p.64).

Some university administrations may also have unwittingly contributed to the problem by undue emphasis on productivity rather than on quality of scholarship. "In awarding promotions and grants, undue weight is sometimes given to the quantity, as opposed to the quality, of a scientist's contributions" (Braunwald, 1987, p. 215).

In view of the above, the University seeks to ensure that its academic policies and procedures do not unwittingly create incentives for scholarly deception. At the same time, it seeks to inform all researchers and scholars that the primary responsibility for high standards of conduct in research and scholarship rests with the individuals carrying out these activities. To this end, the University also endeavours to work with the AUCC and the Tri-Council funding agencies to promote universal principles of integrity and to develop grant selection procedures consistent with these principles.

Guidelines of Integrity

The University promotes integrity in teaching, research and scholarship by making explicit what is expected of its members. The following guidelines supplement the current *Faculty Handbook* of TWU.

Definitions of Research Misconduct

According to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (Savage, 1991, p. 3), misconduct in academic research and scholarly activity means:

- (a) fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism, but does not include those factors intrinsic to the process of academic research, such as honest error, conflicting data or differences in interpretation or judgment of data or of experimental design.
- (b) material failure to comply with federal or provincial regulations for the protection of researchers, human subjects, or the public or for the welfare of laboratory animals,

or material failure to meet other legal requirements that relate to the conduct of research.

(c) failure to reveal to the sponsors any material conflict of interest when asked to undertake reviews of research grant applications or manuscripts for publication, or to test products for sale or distribution to the public.

(d) failure to reveal to the university any material financial interest in a company that contracts with the university to undertake research, particularly research involving that company's products. Material financial interest would include ownership, substantial stock holding, a directorship, significant honoraria or consulting fees.

Misconduct does not include any matter involving only an honest difference of opinion, mistake, or an honest error of judgment. "Reputable errors," or errors which occur in spite of methodological precautions, should be differentiated from "disreputable errors," which result from "sloppy craftsmanship ... the neglect or violation of methodological cannons and procedural precautions" (Zuckerman, 1977, p. 87-138). There is a fine line between disreputable errors and misconduct, and discretion is needed to determine whether the line has been crossed.

Role of Research Supervisors

- Supervision of theses should be done by qualified faculty with the necessary expertise.
- Supervisors are responsible for providing primary guidance and encouragement.
- Supervisors are responsible to advise students regarding ethical guidelines.
- Supervisors must ensure that students/trainees data are accurate and valid.
- Supervisors will encourage quality in research and ethical principles.

Retention of Data

In order to provide access to a complete set of verifiable data and to ensure research accountability, all research documentation and material products of all research carried out by members of the University should be recorded in a durable form and stored for five (5) years by the department in which the data were generated.

Publication & Authorship

Publication credit is an important matter for both the academic community and individual researchers. Difficulties and misconduct may arise when the publication involves more than one author, particularly when a student writer is involved. "Conventionally, the first author should be a junior scholar who actually carries out the study and occasionally

writes up the first draft. The last author should normally be the professor or research supervisor who designs the study and brings the paper into the final shape" (Satyanarayana, 1986, p. 88-91); but there are exceptions. For example, if a thesis is not sufficient to be published by itself, and it is part of a larger research program of the supervisor, then the student will be the second or third author in a major publication based on several studies.

The general rule is that, regardless of status, authorship should reflect "the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved" (Fine & Kurdek, 1993, p. 1142). In cases of collaboration between faculty and their students, both faculty and students should participate in the process of determining authorship credit. Together, they should assess and agree on the expected responsibilities and contributions of those involved throughout the project. Time and effort alone are not sufficient for authorship. Publication credit should reflect relative professional contributions, which include "developing the research design, writing portions of the manuscript, integrating diverse theoretical perspectives, developing new conceptual models, designing assessments, contributing to data analysis decisions, and interpreting results" (p. 1145). "The minimum requirement of authorship of a publication should be participation in conceiving, executing or interpreting at least part of the research reported" (AV-CC, 1990, p. 3). Doing library and database research, inputting data, and carrying out data analyses specified by the supervisor warrant acknowledgment in a footnote rather than publication credit.

If no agreement can be reached between a supervisor and supervisee regarding authorship, even after discussion with peers, the matter will be taken to the Department Chair, Dean, Program Director or Dean of Research and Faculty Development for mediation.

Outside Employment

Policy concerning outside employment is covered in the *Faculty Handbook* (2000), Section C (8). Written permission from the Provost is required of full-time faculty (during the nine-month service term) prior to their accepting outside employment. This policy includes part-time teaching, consulting, and contract research. The chief consideration is that outside employment should not interfere with any of the faculty member's university responsibilities. The University should be properly compensated for the use of any of its facilities and personnel associated with the member's outside employment.

Advisers on Research Integrity

Each year the University nominates an Institutional Review Board (IRB) consisting of persons familiar with the literature and guidelines on scholarly integrity and research misconduct. This board consists of the Dean of Research and Faculty Development, the Chair of the Research Ethics Board and two faculty members from other disciplines. The

IRB gives advice to faculty, staff and students about what constitutes research misconduct. It is also responsible to keep the University community informed about procedures, rights, and responsibilities of its members in upholding scholarly integrity.

Procedures in Dealing with Allegations of Misconduct

Receiving Allegations

Allegations of misconduct should be made in writing to the Chair of the IRB. The report should be signed and include all pertinent details of the allegation and it should be accompanied by as much supporting evidence as possible. The Chair will immediately acknowledge receipt of the complaint and send to the complainant a copy of this policy. The complainant will be given five (5) working days following a receipt of the acknowledgment to withdraw the complaint. If the complainant decides to proceed with the allegation, the IRB will notify the Provost and initiate preliminary investigation. If the IRB decides that there are insufficient grounds for the allegation, it will notify the Provost and the complainant of this decision. If there is sufficient evidence to warrant further investigation, it will also notify the Provost, who will set up an *ad hoc* investigating committee. Allegations from outside the University will be directly dealt with by the Provost.

Investigating Committee

Within ten (10) days of receiving a complaint warranting an investigation, the Provost will appoint an Investigating Committee of at least three faculty who are as far removed from the allegation as possible. The Investigating Committee will also include someone from the IRB. The Committee will be responsible to investigate the allegation and to report to the Provost. The Committee will elect a member to act as chair for the Committee.

The Investigating Committee has the right to view any University documents pertinent to the case and to question any faculty member, staff, or student throughout the investigation. It also may pursue expert opinions regarding the allegations.

Confidentiality & Protection of Parties

The matters pertaining to the allegations and investigation will remain confidential to those parties directly involved or investigating the circumstances. Efforts will be made to protect the identity of those making allegations of misconduct. The University will discipline those who purposefully make false allegations. When no scholarly misconduct is found, every effort will be made by the University to protect the reputation of the individual(s) involved. No such steps will be taken without the consent of the parties involved. If charges are dismissed, all copies of related documents circulated to third parties will be destroyed.

Rights of the Accused

Throughout the inquiry, the accused will be allowed due process and full opportunity to respond to the allegations. Persons alleged to have engaged in misconduct have the right to know all allegations against them and the right to respond fully to the Investigation Committee. The Investigation Committee will provide to the accused a report of the allegations within ten (10) days of receiving the allegation. The Committee will provide the accused specific meeting times to discuss the allegations and evidence prior to conclusions being made. The accused has the right to be accompanied by a person of his or her choice at any meeting in which he or she participates or is present.

Draft Report

Due to the sensitive nature of scholarly misconduct, the Investigating Committee will complete a draft report within sixty (60) days of receiving the allegations. It will provide reasonable opportunity for the accused, any collaborators or supervisors to review and comment on the draft report. Their remarks will be included as appendices in the final report.

Recommendations

The Investigating Committee will make recommendations to the Provost and the President. These recommendations may include:

1. disciplinary actions, such as letter of reprimand, probation, suspension, termination of employment, or expulsion of a student;
2. a full and documented report to be made available to those who have a need to know (i.e. CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC, or other funding sources), within thirty (30) days of the formal case decision, addressing: the process and evidence of inquiry, the conclusions, the sanctions imposed, any actions taken to protect/restore reputation/credibility of person(s) wrongly accused, any actions taken to protect person(s) deemed to have made a responsible accusation;
3. notification of editors of publications in which the involved research was reported. Beyond the funding agencies and editors directly related to the research in question the Provost, the President, and the Faculty Affairs Committee will determine if and how the information regarding a guilty party shall be made public.

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